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ABSTRACT

The 2 papers included in this report concern personal and social effects as reasons for, and reinforcements of, continued drinking. In the first, a study is reported in which 95 indigent chronic alcoholics were interviewed about both the benefits and drawbacks which they associated with drinking. Results show that (1) a change in feeling state was the most frequently cited benefit; and (2) drawbacks included economic loss, impaired functioning and adverse physical effects. The 2nd study reports data from semistructured interviews of 118 similar subjects. The data were subjected to content analysis with reference to desirable and undesirable consequences attributed to drinking. Subjects 40 years of age and younger more frequently stated that alcohol facilitated social participation, while subjects 51 and older more frequently stated that they derived physical relief or relaxation from drinking. In all age groups some form of changed emotional state was reported. (Author/TL)

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Drinking's Reinforcer System Among Rehabilitation Center Alcoholics

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Mulford and Miller (1960) have divided reasons for drinking into "personal effects" and "social effects." These effects can be considered as positive reinforcements which contribute to maintaining drinking behavior. A major mission of a rehabilitation center for alcoholics is to assist its beneficiaries in maintaining sobriety. We thus felt it necessary to study the negative side of drinking's reinforcer system as well as the positive side among these Ss.

Method.

Subjects were 95 indigent chronic alcoholics admitted to a residential rehabilitation center by direct admission and by referral from the Los Angeles Municipal Court, hospitals, and other alcoholic rehabilitation agencies. Data were collected in semistructured, individual interviews in which the interviewer explored both the "benefits" and the "drawbacks" each S associated with drinking. During the interview, each S was also shown the list of reasons offered by Mulford and Miller (1960), and asked which of these, if any, applied to him. The "free" responses were subjected to content analysis. Reliability was evaluated as agreement between judges' independent codings. Differences were resolved by discussion.

Results.

In the interview, some form of change in feeling state was the most frequent benefit Ss stated they derived from drinking. As drawbacks, Ss most frequently gave (a) some form of economic loss, (b) impaired functioning effectiveness, and (c) adverse effects upon physical health. Of the Mulford & Miller items, the most frequently endorsed was "Liquor helps me relax."

The aspect of the results most striking to the researchers was that the "drawbacks" given by the Ss appeared much more "punishing" than the "benefits" were "rewarding", though the "benefits" were experienced much more immediately after the drinking behavior than were the "drawbacks". These findings support the notion of "long-term loss and short-term gain" offered by McAndrew and Garfinkel (1962), though these authors cite no data on which they based this concept. The present findings may be regarded as an example of the process, noted by learning theorists, in which differences in contingency of reinforcement overcome differences which would otherwise exist in the potency of reinforcers to influence behavior.

Presented at the 51st Annual Convention of the Western Psychological Association, San Francisco, California, April, 1971.

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R.G. Hadley & P.A. Hadley
Western Psychological Assn.
San Francisco, 1971

Table 1

Favorable Consequences Attributed to Drinking

	N	%	Code#	
Social	9	9	1.11	Alcohol provides context for social participation.
	20	21	1.12	S feels or behaves differently socially when drinking.
	2	2	1.13	Others' social behavior is different when S drinks.
	4	4	1.14	Drinking is a social following response; reward not made clear.
	11	12	1.1-	Social participation, not further clarified.
	38	40		Social participation -- total.
	0	0	1.2	Alcohol permits escape from social expectations.
Emotional	22	23	2.1	Pleasurable feeling state (e.g. "happy", "feel good").
	45	47	2.2	Emotional relief.
	1	1	2.-	Emotional, not further clarified.
	58	61		Emotional -- total.
Physical	4	4	3.1	Relief from physical effects of alcohol (including hangover symptoms).
	1	1	3.2	Relieves thirst.
	2	2	3.3	Relieves other physical distress.
	12	13	3.4	Relaxation; allows sleep.
	3	3	3.-	Physical relief, not further clarified.
	22	23		Physical relief - total
Effi-ciency	2	2	4.1	Improved efficiency: cognitive processes.
	1	1	4.2	Improved efficiency: motor task performance.
	1	1	4.-	Improved efficiency, not further clarified.
	4	4		Improved efficiency - total.
	4	4	5.1	Likes taste.
	6	6	5.2	Likes to drink.
	10	11		Drinking itself - total.
	11	12	6.-	Pastime (e.g., something to do, escape from boredom).
	5	5	7.-	Functionally autonomous (e.g., "habit", "compulsion")
	1	1	8.-	Stimulates appetite for food.
	7	7	0	None given.

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Western Psychological Assn.
San Francisco, 1971

Table 2

Unfavorable Consequences Attributed to Drinking

	N	%	Code#	
Social Loss	16	17	1.1	Loss of family.
	4	4	1.2	Loss of friends.
	18	19		Social loss - total.
Economic Loss	33	35	2.1	Loss of job(s) (including inability to get jobs. If "quit jobs", code also 3.2)
	9	9	2.2	Loss of money (including "spent all my money").
	4	4	2.3	Loss of property (real and/or personal. If drivers license, code also 4.)
	3	3	2.4	Loss of living quarters.
	1	1	2.-	Economic loss, not further clarified.
	40	42		Economic loss - total.
Impaired Functioning	7	7	3.1	Drinking out of control (e.g., "get drunk", "too much", can't stop").
	25	26	3.2	Impaired task efficiency (including absent from work, "missed chances", "get nowhere", "forget", any specific task botched).
	17	18	3.3	Impaired social functioning (total).
	7	7	3.31	Own social behavior adversely affected.
	6	6	3.32	Rejection by others (Distinguish from loss.)
	6	6	3.3-	Impaired social functioning, not further clarified.
	41	43		Impaired functioning - total.
	28	29	4.	Arrest and/or jail (including arrest for crimes committed while drunk).
Health	9	9	5.1	Hangover (include naming of physical hangover symptoms)
	9	9	5.2	Blackouts
	6	6	5.3	DTs
	3	3	5.4	Physical injury (e.g., accidents, fights)
	2	2	5.5	Death threat (whether through behavior or illness).
	13	14	5.0	Other health problems, specified.
	6	6	5.-	Health problems, not further clarified.
	39	41		Health problems - total.
	16	17	6.	Emotional or "mental" states (social context not clearly implied)
	2	2	7.	Religious.
	2	2	8.	Dislikes taste.
	7	7	0	None given.

Table 3

Frequency of Endorsement of Mulford & Miller's Items

N	%	Item #	
29	30	1.	Liquor helps me forget I am not the kind of person I really want to be.
28	29	2.	Liquor helps me get along better with other people.
28	29	3.	Liquor helps me feel more satisfied with myself.
33	35	4.	Liquor gives me more confidence in myself.
50	53	5.	Liquor helps me forget my problems.
28	29	6.	Liquor makes me less concerned with what other people think of me.
36	38	7.	Liquor helps me overcome shyness.
31	33	8.	Liquor makes me less self-conscious.
48	51	9.	Liquor makes me more carefree.
48	51	10.	Liquor peps me up.
38	40	11.	Liquor gives me pleasure.
42	44	12.	Liquor helps me enjoy a party.
64	67	13.	Liquor helps me relax.
30	32	14.	Liquor improves parties and celebrations.
30	32	15.	Liquor makes a social gathering more enjoyable.
39	41	16.	Liquor goes well with entertainment.
49	52	17.	A drink sometimes helps me feel better.

R.G.Hadley & P.A. Hadley. Presented at Western Psychological Association annual convention, San Francisco, California, April, 1971.

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Age Differences in Drinking's Reinforcer System Among Rehabilitation Center Alcoholics: Implications for Rehabilitation

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Data from semistructured interviews of 118 indigent male chronic alcoholics in a residential rehabilitation center were subjected to content analysis with reference to desirable and undesirable consequences attributed to drinking. Ss 40 years of age and younger more frequently stated alcohol facilitated social participation than did older Ss, and more frequently gave jail or arrest as a drawback to drinking. Ss over 51 years of age more frequently state they derived physical relief or relaxation from drinking than younger Ss. Some form of changed emotional state was prominent among all age groups as a benefit attributed to alcohol

American Psychological Assn., 1971

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Table 1

Favorable Consequences Attributed to Drinking According to Age

	40 & younger (N=40)		41-50 (N=36)		51-60 (N=29)		61 & older (N=13)		Total (N=118)	
Consequence	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Facilitates social participation	25	62	14	39	14	48	4	31	57	48
Changes emotional state	22	55	24	67	17	58	10	77	73	62
Physical relief or relaxation	4	10	6	17	7	24	6	46	23	19
Increased efficiency	0	0	2	16	1	3	2	15	5	4
Likes taste	4	10	4	11	5	17	0	0	13	11
Pastime	4	10	1	3	6	21	1	15	12	10
"Habit" or "compulsion"	2	5	0	0	3	10	1	15	6	5
Stimulates appetite	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	0	2	2
None given	1	2	5	14	1	3	0	0	7	6

Table 2

Undesirable Consequences Attributed to Drinking

According to Age

	40 & younger (N=40)		41-50 (N=36)		51-60 (N=29)		61 & older (N=13)		Total (N=118)	
Consequence	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Loss of family or friends	6	15	7	19	7	24	1	8	21	18
Loss of job(s), money, or living quarters	12	30	16	44	13	45	6	46	47	40
Impaired functioning effectiveness (task or social)	18	45	12	33	11	38	5	38	46	39
Jail or arrest	20	50	9	25	5	17	4	31	38	32
Health	17	42	13	36	12	41	4	31	46	39
Emotional state	6	15	9	25	7	24	4	31	26	22
Religious	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	8	2	2
Dislikes taste	0	0	2	8	0	0	0	0	2	2
"Trouble" (unclarified)	0	0	1	3	1	3	0	0	2	2
None given	3	8	4	11	2	7	1	8	10	8

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